



# COMMUNITY SERVICE NEWSLETTER

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## By the Grace of Water

*Reprinted from the 1997 N°1 Issue of the World Goodwill Newsletter, a quarterly bulletin helping to mobilize the energy of goodwill and to build right human relations.*

Seen from space it is water that is the outstanding, defining characteristic of our planetary home, giving it that instantly recognizable blue hue. As the author Kirkpatrick Sale writes: the "enormous continuum of eternal but ever changing water" makes the Earth "a sight unique in all the known universe." Indeed, he suggests that "what we call the planet Earth should more properly be called the planet Water—for it is the blue and white that define this orb—and the brown and green, though not without their significance for us, are, from the heavenly perspective, only secondary, interruptions in the azure panorama."

Water makes life as we know it possible on our planetary home. Human beings, animals, plants, and the ecosystem in its totality, all depend upon it. As Michael Parfit writes in *National Geographic*, we live "by the grace of water."

Today, and throughout the ages, images of water have nourished the inner worlds of heart and mind. They have been pivotal in the collective dream life, religious traditions, art and literature. Our ancestors, like us, have sought and found recreation, inspiration

and a sense of inner peace in the presence of rivers, lakes and oceans. Yet, particularly in this century, we have organized human affairs as if we were blind to the intrinsic, elemental qualities of water. We have regarded it as if it were a free and unlimited resource for our sole use. Single-mindedly we have tried to tame, dominate and control its cycles and flowing rhythms.

We now count the cost. We are running out of fresh water and destroying the ecosystems of oceans, river deltas and wetlands. Already several countries face serious water shortages—more will in the near future. The poorest communities are still without adequate water for basic health. There are well founded concerns that there will not be enough water to grow the food needed by an ever increasing population. How will we cope with the future water needs of all life on earth?

It is partly in response to this crisis that a new approach is emerging. It is beginning to be recognized that human activity must adapt to the supplies of water available. With care and respect for its intrinsic

properties and with right planning at a local, national and global level, the water available can sustain an adequate lifestyle for the entire population of the planet as well as healthy natural ecosystems. We live by the grace of water. Now we are challenged to give water its full due in our plans for the future. ♣



## Freshwater Crisis

*From the 1997 No. 1 Issue of the World Goodwill Newsletter.*

The surface of the earth is awash with water. It covers almost three-quarters of the planet. Yet, on this watery globe, we are facing an acute shortage of the freshwater needed to sustain human life and activity at its present levels. We have been blind to the fact that the planet has a finite supply of this precious substance. Water has been taken for granted and used recklessly as if it were a limitless resource. Now we are regaining the ability to see water as it truly is. Our 'water sight' is returning— slowly. We are coming to recognize the need to adjust our lifestyles, individually and collectively, so that we can live within the limits of the water available.

### *A Finite Resource*

The planet is awash with water but the freshwater of the atmosphere, rivers, lakes and underground aquifers represents just .000008% of all water. And only a little over one-third of this (the runoff from land and sea) can be drawn upon to sustain human and animal life. It is a remarkable fact that the amount returning to the sea as runoff after rains and snow

remains constant year after year: "The land receives roughly the same amount of water today as when the first civilizations emerged thousands of years ago."

### *Uneven Distribution*

There would still be ample freshwater to supply our needs if it flowed evenly through the areas where most people live. But, as Sandra Postel writes: "nature's delivery of water does not match up well with the distribution of world population." She cites Asia and South America as examples. Asia, with 60% of the world population, has only 36% of the runoff; South America with just 6% of the population has 26% of the runoff. On top of this much of the river flow in the tropics and high altitudes is virtually inaccessible and not able to be used.

### *Use of Water Has Trebled*

Population growth, the rise of megacities and a relentless appetite for food and consumer goods has led to an unprecedented demand for freshwater. Between 1950 and 1990 humanity's total use of water has increased threefold. What is more significant, from 1940 to 1990 per capita use of water doubled—the way modern society functions, each one of us uses more water than our forebears ever did. The increase in use has been made possible by the construction of thousands of large dams. But the rate of building these dams is now slowing down— public opinion against dams is growing, there are few suitable sites left for large dams and environmental and economic costs make them increasingly less attractive to funders such as the World Bank. The slow-down in construction of big dams and natural limits of the runoff available mean that water use cannot treble again in the future— even though the world population is expected to increase in the next thirty years by the same number that was added in the forty years between 1950 and 1990 (2.6 billion.)

### *Water Stress*

In 1995, 44 countries with a combined population of 733 million were officially classified as "water-

stressed.” Water supply is already a critical problem for these countries— most of which find it impossible to be self-sufficient in food. Just over half of the 733 million in water stressed countries live in Africa and the Middle East— by 2025 it is predicted that three-quarters of Africa’s population will live in water-stressed countries. Outside of Africa there are large areas within specific countries that are also seriously water stressed— these include regions of the United States, China and India.

### *The Poor Suffer*

Particularly in regions where water supply is relatively scarce, the water that is available tends to go to the wealthy and the poor are left with polluted and unhealthy water. This is a result of the ethics informing contemporary economics. *Waterlines* reports that: “only 20 percent of current investment in water supply schemes is targeted at the poor.” Yet, worldwide, it is the poor that are most water-stressed. Approximately 25 liters of water a day are needed for one person’s basic survival level drinking and sanitation requirements. Adding hygiene and food preparation gives a minimum of 50 liters per person per day. Over a billion people lack this basic requirement. While the average daily use of a New Yorker is 300 liters, a British city dweller’s is 175 liters and a Bangladeshi rural village’s 45 liters. Universal provision of safe water for drinking, sanitation and hygiene is the most fundamental health issue facing humanity. In 1993 UNICEF reported that 5,000 children died every day from diarrhoeal diseases attributable to insufficient safe water. In 1990, after ten years of global action in the UN Water and Sanitation Decade, 31% of the world’s people had no safe drinking water supplies and 43% lacked sanitation facilities.

### *Water to Grow Food*

A key element of the water crisis is that as the population grows, so does the need for food. And more water is used for growing food than for any other activity. World-wide, agriculture accounts for 65%

of all water use. Food production increase this century has depended, to a great extent, on the development of large irrigation systems. “Irrigated lands account for only 16 percent of the world’s cropland, but they yield some 40 percent of the world’s food.” Grain crops need large quantities of water— and in many areas natural rainfall has to be supplemented by irrigation. It has been estimated that 1,000 tons of water are needed to produce one ton of harvested grain.

Sandra Postel writes:

*“As of 1995, the world as a whole was consuming directly or indirectly (through animal products) an average of just over 300 kilograms of grain per person a year. At this level of consumption, growing enough grain for the 90 million people now added to the planet each year requires an additional 27 billion cubic meters of water annually— roughly 1.3 times the average annual flow of the Colorado River, or about half that of China’s Huang He (Yellow River.) Grain consumption per person varies widely by country, but assuming the global average remains the same as today, it will take an additional 780 billion cubic meters of water to meet the grain requirement of the projected world population in 2025— more than nine times the annual flow of the Nile River.”*

### *Rivers Drying Up*

Globally we cannot continue drawing all water at the present rate: “Water tables are falling, rivers are drying up, and competition for dwindling supplies is increasing.” *The 1996 State of the World Report* lists nine major regions in which water is being pumped from underground aquifers faster than it can be replenished. The damming and diversion of great rivers means that a number are completely dry, for at least part of the year, by the time they reach the sea. This includes the Ganges, the Yellow River and

the Colorado River. There is the additional problem that, without proper management, irrigated land eventually becomes unproductive due to salt poisoning—as water evaporates it leaves a concentration of salts in the soil. Over 10% of the world's irrigated lands are said to suffer sufficiently from salt poisoning to significantly lower crop yields.

### *Ecosystem Damage*

Industrial pollution, damming of rivers and over-exploitation of aquifers has interfered with the natural balance of water systems. Janet N. Abramowitz writes:

*"When we jeopardize a freshwater ecosystem's integrity—its physical, chemical and biological elements and processes—we compromise its ability to support species and provide the products and services we depend on, services such as controlling floods, purifying water, recharging aquifers, restoring soil fertility, supporting recreation, nurturing fisheries, and supporting evolution."*

She notes that it is the sheer scale of the human assault on freshwater ecosystems that is dangerous. Freshwater is the home for 12% of all animal species, and in recent years 20% of all freshwater species have become extinct or endangered. In California 95% of wetlands have disappeared. In Bangladesh the regular drying up of the Ganges river delta causes salt water to destroy mangrove and fish habitats—with a disastrous effect on local people. The Nile river delta, vital to Egypt's economy and food supply, is gradually disappearing into the sea because the silt which would normally replenish the soil and keep it fertile is trapped by the Aswan High Dam.

### *Water Stress Fuels Tensions*

When water is scarce, competition for access to supplies becomes increasingly tense and a potential source of violent conflict. An increasingly common source of tension is between the demands of agricul-

ture, industry and cities. In the U.S. this has involved cities purchasing farmers' rights to the water on their land at exorbitant prices. Robin Clarke describes a pulp factory in India which constructed two reservoirs, drawing off water from the Chambal River. In the dry season when water is scarce, local farmers have no water for irrigation while the pulp factory's extravagant use of water continues. Factory security guards protect the reservoirs and at times assault the villagers. In poorer rural areas of the developing world it is not uncommon for village wells and water supplies to dry up as river water is diverted and water from underground aquifers drawn from deeper levels to grow export cash crops to supply the growing needs of local cities. Competing claims for water will inevitably heighten tensions in the future.

The gravest cause of concern is the potential for international conflict over water. "Any river that forms a border between two countries courses through the middle of a watershed that spans those two countries. And any river that flows through two or more nations—as 214 do—is supported by ecosystems that cut across political boundaries." As the population of downstream countries increases they become increasingly vulnerable to the actions of upstream countries. Sandra Postel cites as potential hot spots: the Ganges, the Nile, the Jordan, the Tigris-Euphrates and the Amu Dar'ya and Syr Dar'ya. While there are innumerable treaties governing equitable use of international freshwater sources "in none of today's potential hot spots of water dispute does a treaty exist that includes all parties within the river basin."



## Applying Goodwill

There is an urgent need for goodwill energy to be applied to the task of adapting lifestyles and cultures so that we can all live within the limits of available freshwater. Sandra Postel outlines what, in her view, needs to be done. She calls for a global approach in

which each nation, and the international community, makes a realistic assessment of the limits posed to food production and economic prospects by freshwater supplies. On the basis of this assessment she calls for three goals for future water use: "satisfying basic human and ecological needs; using and allocating the remaining water more efficiently, and sharing international waters equitably."



right quality is to be available both for mankind and the rest of the planetary ecosystem." Citizen concern will have to be mobilized to put pressure on local, national, regional and international political processes. He proposes a Global Freshwater Convention, incorporating a Freshwater Treaty and a Global Freshwater Commission as a way of awakening public opinion to the need for a 'blue revolution' and of implementing the principles laid out in Agenda 21, Chapter 18.

### *Global Assessment*

The process of initiating the research needed to prepare a global assessment of water limits began in 1965 with the UNESCO coordinated International Hydrological Decade. Over 3,000 studies were done. The Decade led to the 1977 UN World Water Conference when a number of key individuals and development agencies began to wake up to the water crisis. Earlier this decade, the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, and the Dublin gathering to consider water issues in preparation for that Summit, culminated in a special section in Agenda 21, Chapter 18, recommending key principles for managing water resources sustainably. Later this year a thorough assessment of the situation, the first ever, is due to be presented by the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development to the UN General Assembly. In recent years several major initiatives have been taken to bring together governments, UN agencies and key organizations to help co-ordinate a global water policy.

### *Blue Revolution*

Anthony Milburn, Executive Director of the International Association on Water Quality, has called for a 'blue revolution' in the way humanity manages its freshwater. In a recent paper he argues that, among other things, there is a need for a transformation of attitudes and behavior if "adequate freshwater of the

### *Basic Human Needs*

Sharing water to meet basic human needs was a key element of the 1980's UN International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade. The aim, "water and sanitation for all by 1990," was over-optimistic but there was a significant application of the energy of goodwill, and much was achieved. During the decade US \$10 billion a year were spent on efforts to reach the goal. It is estimated that 1.3 billion people gained safe water supplies and 748 million sanitation services although, due to population increase, there are more people without basic services at the end of the decade than at the beginning.

Important lessons were learnt during the decade. Water and sanitation programs now form a major part of the community work in developing countries. It is now common to adopt a holistic approach involving local communities in all areas of planning: how they will meet their water needs; and how they will help cover the costs, sometimes install, maintain and manage low-tech. water and sanitation facilities. In this way bringing safe water and sanitation to a rural or urban community has become a process of community awakening and transformation. A key element of many water projects is that women are

now consulted and involved at every level of planning, implementation and management.

### *Efficient Use*

Much is being done to develop environmentally-friendly, water-sensitive and often low-cost appropriate technologies to use more water more efficiently. These range from new toilet systems to showerheads, to drip-water irrigation (still costly), and traditional farming techniques which store and harvest water from even the lightest rains. There is increasing pressure for water-thirsty cash crops which earn foreign exchange for developing countries to be replaced by food crops suited to low rainfall areas. In urban areas up to 60% of piped water in developing countries and 12% in industrial countries is wasted due to leaking pipes and infrastructure—with investment significant savings can be made.

### *South African Model*

In 1996 South Africa's minister of Water Affairs and Forestry announced a set of visionary principles to be implemented in a water law due to be presented to Parliament early in 1997. The principles include the aim to provide every South African with access to at least 25 liters of safe water a day, to allocate water to the environment, to reserve water for other countries that rivers flow into, and to price water at a level reflecting its true value and hence to reduce waste.


### *Environment*

There has been little progress in allocating scarce water resources to the protection of ecosystems but there are cases where this has been done. In the United States, for example, Congress passed legislation in 1992 to take considerable quantities of water away from the Central Valley Irrigation Project in California to help sustain fish and wildlife habitats. In "one of the planet's greatest environmental tragedies," the Aral Sea Basin, where vast quantities of water are drained from rivers to irrigate cotton and

rice crops, some progress has been made in creating wetlands and lakes for fish and wildlife.


### *Individual Action*

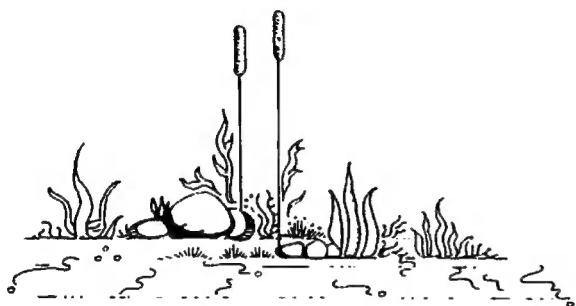
Resolution of the water crisis depends upon each of us becoming more conscious of our own water use and as a result, using water responsibly. Ultimately the ending of pollution and wasteful water use and the conservation of water will be achieved by the informed action of people of goodwill. ♣



*Our common life should be like an interwoven fabric, in which the whole makes one design. A fabric is much more interesting if the various parts are not just repetitions, but have their individual, sometimes strikingly individual design, but which contributes to a total design. But for life to have design there must be interrelation and communication. Otherwise a collection of people is not like a tapestry design, but more like a stretch of sand made up of grains which have no inherent relationship. The wind and the tides may give the appearance of design, but it is only external and the next wind or tide may change it. The beauty of life is that to some extent society has design. People relate to each other by communicating and living and working in co-operation. To some extent life is unbeautiful because we act like grains of sand which happen to be close to each other but have only a low order of interrelation. It is interesting and important that each of us as individuals can introduce some element of design into the social accumulation of which we are a part.*

Arthur E. Morgan, 1965  
OBSERVATIONS





## Chief Seattle Had It Right

BY MICHAEL L. FISCHER & JOHN H. ADAMS

*Reprinted from the April 1997 Issue (Vol. VII, #1) of Impact, The Newsletter of Calvert Social Investment Fund (CSIF.)*

"This we know," Chief Seattle is reported to have said in 1852: "the earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."

The protection of our environment—and that of our children—faces serious challenges in America.

To meet these challenges, it is imperative that America adopt a fundamentally different approach to doing business. Industry-led attacks on environmental laws, and the short-term imperative that corporate CEOs maximize their quarterly dividends, are among the greatest threats to our environment today.

It will take more than government regulators, tough courts, and citizen activists to force a better future. Concerned investors can help catalyze the business changes that are so essential to the health of our planet by urging corporations to go beyond the traditional bottom line. We must adopt a broader

definition of success, one that acknowledges a company's long-term impact on society and the environment. Corporations must choose this path as a matter of sound, long-term investing.

### *The Challenges*

As custodians of our children's environmental future, we are confronted with four interrelated challenges: 1) addressing population growth and consumption of resources; 2) reducing pollution; 3) protecting and restoring wilderness, habitats, and scenic beauty; 4) and providing environmental justice for all people.

### *Population*

It's been said that all the rest of our environmental efforts are simply "rearranging the deck chairs of the Titanic" if we fail to address the growth of the world's population. Continued growth will put even greater strains on our planet's natural wealth. This is true even in the United States. For example, California's current population of 32 million people is expected to double before the year 2050. California's Central Valley is one of the world's most productive agricultural areas. But if urban sprawl continues, the Central Valley will be forced to import food to feed its own population.

### *Pollution*

Americans are still dying from smog-caused emphysema, waterborne diseases, and toxic wastes dumped on industrial sites. The ozone hole continues to expand; significant global climate change by the middle of the next century is accepted as fact by the overwhelming majority of serious scientists. But in the face of this threat, regulatory reforms pioneered by Congress would grant industrial polluters broad new powers to challenge, ignore, or flout environmental and health protection laws.

In fact, when the last Congress adjourned, it left behind more than 50 pieces of failed anti-environmental legislation, including measures that would have weakened both the Clean Air and Clean Water



Acts. Only widespread public outcry and a major push by environmental organizations prevented this roll-back. Unfortunately, many legislators who fought for these anti-environment bills have returned to powerful positions in Congress.

### *Habitat*

In some areas, especially along the nation's coastline, wetland habitats have been restored. This is good news, given that most of our historical coastal wetlands have been destroyed in the past two centuries. But sadly, this good news is the exception. The oil, timber, and mining giants have their eyes on much of the nation's public lands and are courting their powerful friends in Congress and flexing their legal muscle in the courts. Clearcutting remains the rule in the Pacific Northwest. Endangered state and federal species protections are also under serious attack.

### *Environmental Justice*

It has been demonstrated over and over that the most polluted areas—"cancer alleys," Superfund sites, sewage treatment plants—are disproportionately located in or adjacent to communities (and nations) of poor people or people of color. Quality of life is dramatically lower and significant health problems are demonstrably higher in these seriously affected areas. The gap between rich and poor continues to grow, creating an unstable and unsustainable society. As America's population becomes more diverse, environmental justice will undoubtedly become a more potent political and economic issue.

### *Obstacles to Surmounting These Challenges*

We have built into our American culture a number of basic practices that stand in the way of a sustainable future. Our extravagant consumer lifestyle, greatly encouraged by Madison Avenue, is ethically suspect and ecologically untenable for the planet's long-term survival. Consider: We in the United States comprise 4% of the world's population but use 30% of the Earth's resources.

We make economic decisions based on the market and political decisions based on the number of votes. But the future doesn't shop and the future doesn't vote. Thus the value of the future has been sharply discounted in our society.

We have fallen into the habit of assuming that natural resources are simply commodities: Everything for sale. For example, federal officials are negotiating a land swap with Maxxam Corporation in order to prevent the company from clearcutting the Headwaters Forest, one of the last remaining privately held groves of ancient Coastal Redwoods on Earth. Again, Chief Seattle: "... how can you buy or sell the sky? The land? If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?"

### *Good News: The Change We Need is Possible*

There are signs that some corporate leaders are willing to think—and act—in terms of "multiple bottom lines," some of which have nothing to do with dollars. Last year, President Clinton's Council on Sustainable Development, which includes Cabinet officers, civic leaders, and heads of Fortune 500 companies, released its final report. After three years of debate, they endorsed bedrock concepts of environmental stewardship: preservation of the nation's environmental laws; GDP accounting that recognizes the value of green resources and the costs of depleting them; and the "green tax shift" to move taxation away from income and toward activities that harm the environment. The report is a base from which to build, and the corporations that participated now have a chance to demonstrate real leadership. Further, some chemical companies and electric utilities have recently begun to monitor their emissions of carbon dioxide and other climate-changing gases. Other corporations are following the lead of some Japanese companies in adopting long-range (150-200 year) business plans. If such planning is done thoughtfully, the future can become a real participant in corporate endeavors.



Investors can make a difference by voting with their dollars to support companies with exemplary environmental practices. Simply investing in the best companies of the worst industries should not be acceptable. Now more than ever, there is a need for investors to demand visionary leadership and long-term thinking from the companies they own. Shareholders have the responsibility—and the opportunity—to help create a world that does justice to the wisdom of Chief Seattle's message. ♣

*Michael L. Fischer is Executive Director of the California Coastal Conservancy and chair of the Environmental Committee of the CSIF Advisory Council. John H. Adams is Executive Director of the Natural Resources Defense Council, one of the nation's foremost environmental organizations.*



## Committed Living for Sustainable Community

The theme of our fall conference this year will be "Committed Living for Sustainable Community." It will begin Friday evening, October 17<sup>th</sup> and continue through Sunday noon, October 19<sup>th</sup> at the Outdoor Education Center (OEC) in the Glen Helen nature preserve, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

Friday night's keynote talk on "Simple Alternatives, Birth to Death" will be given by Joe Jenkins, author of *THE SLATE ROOF BIBLE* and the popular *HUMAN-URE HANDBOOK*. In discussing these simple alternatives, Joe will be focusing on the "sustainability" issue by looking at ways to do common, necessary human activities such as birthing, child-rearing, education, food production, home construction, healing, community celebrations, spirituality, and finally, death, without the focus on obedient consumerism (and money) that is so prevalent today. "Many people," he says, "feel enslaved to the economic system that makes life little more than a daily grind of working for money. There are alternatives." He has personally pursued alternatives for over two decades and will share with us the insights he has gained, drawing upon his experience and those of others. He will be looking for the middle ground between the simple ways of the past and the hi-tech ways of today. Later Friday evening, Denise Runyon will lead us in Dances of Universal Peace.

Saturday morning we will have a chance to meet the other presenters:

- ▶ Tova Green of California's Crabgrass organization and author of *INSIGHT AND ACTION*;
- ▶ Greg Coleridge, Director of Economic Justice and Empowerment Program for the Northeast Ohio American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) based in Akron;
- ▶ Robin Frees, a clinical social worker and educator in Columbus, Ohio.

During the course of the day, each presenter will conduct the following workshops twice so that attendees can participate in two workshops.

Joe Jenkins' workshop will be on "Self-Publishing." He says "there are three basic ways to publish, one is called subsidy or vanity publishing, which is what people do who just want to see their name in print. The second is to have someone else publish your work for you, for profit (mostly theirs.) The third way is to self-publish, a technique employed by Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, Mary Baker Eddy and many others. In our culture we've been led to believe that someone else has to do everything for us. That someone else is also making money from our acquiescence, and in the publishing world that someone else decides, often arbitrarily and with an eye on profit, what goes into print and what doesn't. For writers who believe in themselves and don't need to meet someone else's standards, self-publishing is a realistic alternative."

Tova Green's workshop will be "Community Building Through Support Groups and Clearness Meetings" (the focus of her book *INSIGHT AND ACTION*.) Tova attended Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio from 1957-1960. She was active in the civil rights movement, became a social worker, and in the 80's was involved in anti-nuclear activism. Since 1990 she has lived in the San Francisco Bay Area, where she works with Fran Peavey on social change projects both locally and internationally, in the former Yugoslavia and in India. She is president of the board of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF), co-author of *INSIGHT AND ACTION*, and a frequent contributor to *Turning Wheel*, the journal of BPF.

Greg Coleridge's workshop will be on "Community Power Through Local Currency." The Quaker social action organization for which he works (AFSC) seeks nonviolent solutions to human problems through participatory education on social issues and organizing people to change their conditions. Currently,

Coleridge, a graduate of Oberlin College, is helping to organize Summit Hours, a local currency/barter project which seeks to meet people's basic needs, build community, meet needs of the unemployed and underemployed, expand the local money supply, keep wealth circulating locally by supporting locally-based businesses, reduce dependence on imports and nonrenewable resources, and help educate participants and the public on economics (e.g. how money and economics can work for, instead of against, grassroots people, local businesses and communities.)

Robin Frees is interested in integrating new models of mental health and psychotherapy. She incorporates environmentally related therapeutic practice in individual and group work. She will conduct a workshop on "Ecopsychology: The Human-Nature Relationship." In her workshop she will provide an overview of ecopsychology, show a video of Theodore Roszak discussing ecopsychology, and discuss five ecological perceptual practices. She will show new models of mental health which focus on the connections between the "personal" and planetary healing which must include sustainable and mutually-enhancing relations with the natural world.

Saturday evening, weather permitting, we will have a bonfire outdoors to which we encourage people to bring drums and/or other musical instruments. Joe Jenkins would also like those attending to share at this time ideas for group rituals, songs, chants and/or dances.

After breakfast Sunday morning will be a time for silent meditation followed by a group discussion facilitated by Tova Green.

As in the past, more than simply discussing theories of community, we will again be having an experience of community. Attendees will select the work assignment they would like to perform. Choices range from meal prep/clean-up or helping to build the bonfire to

bunkhouse clean-up and sharing in childcare. Housing will be on-site in the OEC's bunkhouse lodges. Attendees are also encouraged to come prepared to share their skills with others during free time.

Please save these dates, October 17-19<sup>th</sup>, and look forward to receiving our conference brochure with costs, schedule and registration form. ♣

## Book Review



COLD RUNNING RIVER, by David N. Cassuto; University of Michigan Press; 141 pp; \$29.95 hardcover, \$15.95 paperback.

BY PHIL CATALFO

Those concerned about the present state and future prospects of the environment need hard information and motivating hope in equal measures; neither one, without the other, is sufficient to ward off ecological catastrophe. David Cassuto's COLD RUNNING RIVER, an "ecological biography" of one river that rebounded from abuse of its watershed, offers enough of both to convince the reader that the natural world may yet restore itself, if we can only manage to stay out of the way.

Part oral history, part natural history and part meditation on the immutability of the forces that drive natural systems, the book recounts the life of the Pere Marquette, a spring-fed river that runs westward for 138 miles in Michigan's lower peninsula, draining four feeder rivers and 740 square miles before emptying into Lake Michigan. Cassuto, an instructor at Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs, bases his report on that school's almost decade-long study of the watershed.

About 12,000 years ago, the region was settled by Native Americans who lived for more than 10 millennia in the area. Then came white colonizers, trappers, settlers and business interests. Following 17th century forays by missionaries, including the French Jesuit Jacques Marquette, for whom the river was named, came the fur trade in the late 18th century.

"Michigan's fur trade boomed and then petered out as the animal population plunged, unable to keep pace with the trappers' zeal," Cassuto writes. "By 1840 the region had been systematically depleted of any animal with a marketable pelt."

A few decades later, logging had its turn, fueled by increasing demand from growing Eastern cities. Starting around 1870, Cassuto notes, "the river was indentured to the timber industry, a hapless accomplice in the watershed's destruction." Millions of logs flowed downstream, often jamming the river so completely that people could walk across it without getting their shoes wet. When, in 1904, the last log drive took place on the Pere Marquette, Cassuto adds, "there were no more logs to drive; lumbermen had logged the area into the ground. No prime timber escaped the clear-cut and the watershed was left reeling from thirty-five years of blitzkrieg economy." Soil eroded, wildlife disappeared and "the first third of the twentieth century found the watershed of the Pere Marquette neglected and barren."

But ■ curious thing happened. Having been depleted, the ecosystem was largely left alone. Much property fell into state hands, eventually forming the beginnings of national forest land or vacation communities. The New Deal-era Civilian Conservation Corps replanted the land. By the 1940s, the river had healed enough to attract fish populations—and the devotion of trout fisherman. The ecosystem was not the same as before— what had been a mixed hardwood and pine forest was now primarily pine— but it had been reborn.

There would be other stresses. With 50 million people living within an hour's drive of the river, the popularity of fishing brought a surfeit of visitors and the local economy's dependence on them. The sea lamprey, ■ parasitic eel originating in the Atlantic Ocean, colonized the Great Lakes, threatening the entire region's fishery; resource managers' response was to poison their spawning grounds— including the Pere Marquette. That and other efforts made for ongoing conflict between local and regional authorities and inhabitants over the fate and management of the river. Later, a huge increase in canoeing on the river meant that "people jostle for room at spots where they've come to get away from it all."

But through it all, the river steadfastly flowed, and Cassuto's achievement is that in one slim volume he has archived all the voices and influences that were subsumed in that ceaseless torrent in such ■ way that what impresses us most is the flow itself. Through the words of old-timers who have lived on the river since the 1920s (or whose families settled there even earlier), we come to love this river we've never seen, for its own sake.

The account of the river's tortured history, the conflicting modern voices and historical interests, the fact that the river, left to its own devices, essentially undid a century of more of pervasive abuse— these elements, in Cassuto's understated presentation,

make this story a parable about the futility of humanity's notion that it can control a natural system.

The lesson we come away with is that, as Barry Commoner, cited several time here, says, "Nature knows best." ■

*Phil Catalfo is a contributing editor of New Age Journal.*



## The Little Neighborhood That Could— And Did

BY LAUREN MITTEN

Five years ago, people regarded the Boyd-Booth neighborhood as possibly the most dangerous neighborhood in the city of Baltimore, and one of the busiest in terms of drug-selling on the East Coast. Open-air drug dealing paralyzed the community with fear. While terrified neighborhood residents hid in their homes, drug dealers ran the streets. *The Evening Sun* (May 13, 1991) described the presence of drug suppliers and buyers as "thick as flies," for, at times, as many as 400 drug dealers and buyers gathered on ■ street at once.

Now, *Baltimore Magazine* (June 1996) lists the Boyd-Booth Neighborhood, along with the affluent neighborhoods of Roland Park and Guilford, as ■ safer neighborhood in Baltimore City. Moreover, according to the *Baltimore Comprehensive Communities Program Summary* written by Michael Sar-

banes and distributed by the Mayor's Coordinating Council on Criminal Justice, violent crime in Boyd-Booth decreased by 52% over the past three years, total crime dropped by 40% between 1994 and 1995, and drug arrests decreased by 80% from 1993 to 1995. What happened in Boyd-Booth to create this remarkable change?

During the winter of 1993-1994, community residents developed a comprehensive strategy to deal with the escalating drug activity and random violence within the Boyd-Booth neighborhood. This plan was devised under the leadership of three working-class women, Adell Reddon, Hattie Williams, and Barbara McFail, with the aid of Kevin Jordan, a community organizer at the Citizens Planning and Housing Association. They formed alliances with other concerned parties: The Community Law Center, the Southwestern Police District, a task force of city agencies and community associations begun by Mayor Kurt Schmoke, the Victory Outreach Residential Treatment Center, and Bon Secours Hospital. Together, they successfully carried out the comprehensive strategy.

This strategy entailed six steps. First, drug dealers were denied the space to set up shop. To do this, community residents and other concerned parties boarded up vacant buildings used in drug sales and barricaded alleys used as escape routes by drug dealers. Step two involved increasing community involvement and accountability. Concerned parties sent letters to all landlords requesting that they repair run-down property and refrain from renting property to known drug dealers. If the landlords did not comply, then the community took legal action to abate nuisance properties. The third step was to eradicate feelings of impunity. Participants achieved this goal by helping the Southwestern Police Force to identify areas: they pointed out houses used in drug transactions. The fourth crucial step was to express community intolerance for drug activity. Many residents attached signs opposing drug dealing

to the windows of their homes and held consistent community vigils and picnics on drug corners. Providing alternatives to the drug sub-culture was the fifth step. One way in which they carried out this step was to involve the youth in clean-up programs. The Boyd-Booth community encouraged the participation of the youth with incentives of field trips and small stipends as payment for their services. The final step of the comprehensive strategy was to increase community strength. The Boyd-Booth community accomplished this by establishing a formal community association with bylaws, block representatives, and a board of directors.

Amazingly, no one was shot while participating in the comprehensive community program. Open-air drug activity is no longer a devastating problem for the Boyd-Booth community. Within this community, violent crime continues to decrease.

By working together and by being committed to the eradication of drug activity within their community, the Boyd-Booth team made a difference. Now, children can safely play outside and adults can spend time on their porches after sundown.

What have we learned from the Boyd-Booth experience? We have learned that this six-step strategic plan *works*. According to the report of the Mayor's Coordinating Council on Criminal Justice, "any given block and any given community can make it difficult or impossible for an open-air drug market to operate," because a committed core of residents "exists or could be brought together in almost every neighborhood." The change in the Boyd-Booth neighborhood provides us with hope for other crime-ridden communities. We have learned that by working together as a community we have the power to create a change. ■

*Lauren Mitten serves as a researcher at the Center for the Study of Conflict, 5846 Bellona Ave., Baltimore, MD 21212; 410/323-7656.*

## Readers Write

### Newsletter Feedback

Thanks for your account of "The Value and Future of Simple Living" conference [Vol. XLV No. 2.] Yes, regarding Joe Jenkins on his experiences!

Charles Siegel's remark that the "Luddite" label marginalizes can be true for many paths. Some styles of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam marginalize, blocking insights which might help us to move away from our destructive path as over-consumers and over-producers. Just asking ourselves how Christian nations (so-labeled) could be the most frantic leaders in consumerism might provide some help. Why did American immigrants refuse to consider the lifestyles of Native Americans as offering insights into simple living? From destruction of the cedars of Lebanon to the great forests of Europe what drove us, whose spiritual ancestry hails from a part of the world stripped of so much plant life, to continue this rapacious, grass-cutting, tree-felling, controlling way of conducting our lives? World-denying, impatient waiting for deliverance via a Second Coming hardly inspires teaching a sustainable lifestyle! Now the Japanese, Thais, Malaysians and Indonesians are into consumerism. Will the Chinese succumb, too? Shall we just blame the devil and go on— business as usual?

Emily Noble, *Indianapolis, IN*

Enjoy all of the newsletters . . . read cover to cover with each arrival.

S. Cameron, *Raleigh, NC*

### Searching for Community

In thirty-seven years of searching for the ideal community, I now turn to your organization for assistance. As an educated social worker and psychiatric nurse, my desire is to live and work within a secure and stable community environment with mentally

and/or physically handicapped individuals. Innisfree, Mountainview, L'Arche and Camphill have proved rewarding (each for a year commitment) but I have yet to discover the lifetime community environment for myself. Please send me information on communities, as my search continues.

David C. Harrer  
261 Michigan Ave.  
Mobile, AL 36604

### Correspondence Desired

Currently I am incarcerated and I would appreciate being placed on your mailing list. I truly believe the information you're providing will assist me in my preparation for the future.

If possible, I would like to have contact with others who can assist me in learning how to help build a better community and deal with problems facing my community [crime, poor education, etc.] Thank you in advance for your concern and assistance.

Troy Lee Morton  
Dept. #171791, 10522 Boyer Rd.  
Carson City, MI 48811-9713

## Announcements

### Community Service Directorship Search

Community Service, Inc., founded in 1940 by Arthur E. Morgan, is seeking a new Director. Community Service is a nonprofit organization with a long-standing commitment to education, small communities, land trusts and the environment.

Responsibilities of the Director include, but are not limited to: producing a quarterly newsletter, organizing a local yearly conference, maintaining a library and mail order book service on various aspects of

community life, working closely with a board of trustees, fundraising, and financial planning. Knowledge of computers is essential, along with leadership skills and vision for the future. This is a 3/4-time position with salary negotiable. The Search Committee will begin considering applicants on August 15, 1997, and the position will remain open until filled.

Send a résumé and a letter indicating why you are interested in this position to: Search Committee, c/o Community Service, PO Box 243, Yellow Springs, OH 45387.

### Twin Oaks Women's Gathering

Come celebrate women— our knowledge, wisdom, humor and courage. August 22-24 in Louisa, VA. For more information contact Twin Oaks Women's Gathering, 138 Twin Oaks Rd., Louisa, VA 23093 or call 540/894-5126.



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### Membership

Membership is a means of supporting and sharing in the work of Community Service. The basic \$25 annual membership contribution includes a subscription to our quarterly Newsletter and 10% off Community Service-published literature. Larger contributions are always needed and smaller ones gladly accepted. Contributions of \$12 cover the newsletter only. All contributions are tax-deductible. Due to added postage costs, foreign membership, including Canada, is \$30 in U.S. currency.

### Have Your Friends Seen The Newsletter?

Please send the names and addresses of your friends who might enjoy receiving a sample Newsletter and booklist. For specific issues, send \$1 per copy.

### Editor's Notes

We welcome letters to the editor (under 300 words) and articles (700-2000 words) about notable communities or people who are improving the quality of life in their communities. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you wish the article returned. The only compensation we can offer is a year's subscription to our newsletter, the satisfaction of seeing your words in print, and knowing you have helped spread encouraging and/or educational information.

### Address Change

If there is an error on your mailing label, or you are moving, please send the old label and any corrections to us. It increases our cost greatly if the Post Office notifies us of moves, and you will not receive your newsletter promptly.



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